



The Trail Builder

Newsletter of the Ozark Trail Association - FALL 2006



Construction Report

OTA crews spent last winter clearing 200 miles of trail: chainsawing, lopping, signing and even leafblowing in places. The work was much needed and much appreciated. But after a few months of maintenance, the same question kept popping up at each outing—'John, when are we going to start building more trail?'

Well, we had good intentions to start out the trail building season. Our first order of business was the much-anticipated re-route of the Taum Sauk trail at Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park. However, the OTA and DNR were not able to solidify an agreement on how the work was to proceed. (More on this is in Steve's report). Our second order of business was to work in the Roger Pryor Backcountry on the 13-mile Brushy Creek loop in cooperation with the Sierra Club. The same type of work agreement applies to the Brushy Creek loop as well so until this is finalized, work can't begin. The 13-mile loop trail is an integral part of another upcoming project, the Current River Trail to Round Spring. More on that in a moment. Our third
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The Ozark Trail Association is a non profit group with the mission to "Build, Maintain, Preserve and Protect the natural beauty of the Ozark Trail."

The Ozark Trail Association Newsletter is published four times each year and is mailed to all members. If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact margo@ozarktrailguide.com. Contributions are welcomed and may be mailed to: Editor, Ozark Trail Association, 483 South Kirkwood Road #40, Kirkwood, MO 63122.

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President's Report

I hope you had a nice summer. Fall is here and the 100-degree days of summer have given way to cooler air and chilly winds. I was very fortunate to explore some of the country this summer with trips to the Pacific Northwest and to south Florida. I was able to hike a very nice alpine trail in the Cascades outside of Seattle and through a tropical mangrove swamp in Florida. They were both wonderful experiences with very unique features, but, I'm always glad to get back to the Ozarks. Because of work and family commitments and the heat, I wasn't able to get out much this summer.

There wasn't much on-the-ground activity this summer, just some routine maintenance here and there. But that doesn't mean there wasn't any activity. In fact a lot of planning and organizing was devoted to developing trails in Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park (JSI) and Pioneer Forest, which involved working with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The OTA's history with DNR has been limited to Ozark Trail Council meetings. We were hoping to change that this fall with the reroute of the Taum Sauk Section through JSI and some new trail in the Roger Pryor Backcountry. The OTA and DNR worked diligently throughout the summer to secure a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlining construction and maintenance procedures on DNR-managed land. But DNR has their hands full with the rebuilding of JSI and an agreement was not secured in time for the work events. Several planning, scouting and flagging meetings were held throughout the summer and planning and construction reports were submitted to DNR in order to help secure the MOA. The DNR was very receptive to the location of the trail reroute at JSI and had verbally given approval of its location. They were also verbally in support of the proposed Current River trail in the Roger Pryor Backcountry (more in John Roth's Construction Report). This work is not wasted as the OTA and DNR are continuing to work to secure an MOU hopefully early next year. As I said earlier, DNR has their hands full with rebuilding JSI. It's

unfortunate that we've had this setback in the schedule, but I'm confident it's only temporary. I will be coordinating meetings this fall with DNR representatives to try and secure the necessary working agreements that will allow OTA volunteers to proceed with building new trail so we can keep our trail building machine churning! More details to come.

In light of the cancellation at JSI, we were able to shift our mega-event to Council Bluff Lake where we constructed a half-mile trail spur between the lake and the Trace Creek section. Many thanks go out to the US Forest Service for arranging the event on short notice (see feature article). I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the continuing rehabilitation of the North Fork Section where we'll be working throughout the winter. We'll base these outings at Noblett Lake campground. We started maintenance work on the North Fork last April with several University of Missouri students and managed to re-open over a mile of trail.

Whether it's trail construction or maintenance, the OTA has a job for you and we'd love for you to be a part of the experience. Check out our "work parties" page (<http://www.ozarktrail.com/workparties.asp>) to get more information.

Hope to see you on the trail!

Steve



When life interferes

“The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry.” *Adapted from a line in “To a Mouse” by Robert Burns: “The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ men/ Gang aft a-gley.”*

The OTA has celebrated the completion of the Middle Fork section April 29, 2006. I planned to come, but life interfered. I wanted to be a part of the historic event in this organization and to applaud the hard work of so many volunteers. The Fall Mega Event was scheduled, cancelled and rescheduled September 23. The OTA and DNR also had plans that went awry and resulted in multitudinous re-writes and stalled publication of the newsletter and still the OTA hikes on. Through heat and bugs, rain and cold, the organization continues. Have you been able to participate or has life interfered in your OTA volunteer plans too?

Life and the daily responsibilities push and pull at us, gas prices soar and road construction seems endless. So how do you help if you barely have time to get one hike in a year?

- The OTA needs your continued financial commitment. By continuing your membership or increasing it to a lifetime level, you are mailing of newsletters, building websites and feeding volunteers.
- Bring in another member. Talk to co-workers, friends and family. Maybe they are looking for vacation ideas. Let them know about the OTA and your favorite camping and hiking spots. Give them information about the OTA’s spring and fall Volunteer Vacations. Sending volunteers (who may become members) builds and maintains the OTA just as if you were there yourself.
- Fancy yourself a writer? Submit an experience you have had on the OTA for publication in the newsletter.
- Check your company’s corporate donation requirements. Even a small donation to a specific event or area can help.

It is easy to let the days slide by in a blur of commuting, working, eating and sleeping. There will always be obstacles to getting on the trail. Take heart knowing there are ways you can help the OTA even when you’re not there.

OTA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization Contact Steve Coates at steve.coates@charter.net for donations.

Email your newsletter submissions to DianeT@midsouth.rr.com.

See back of newsletter for ways to increase your membership level.

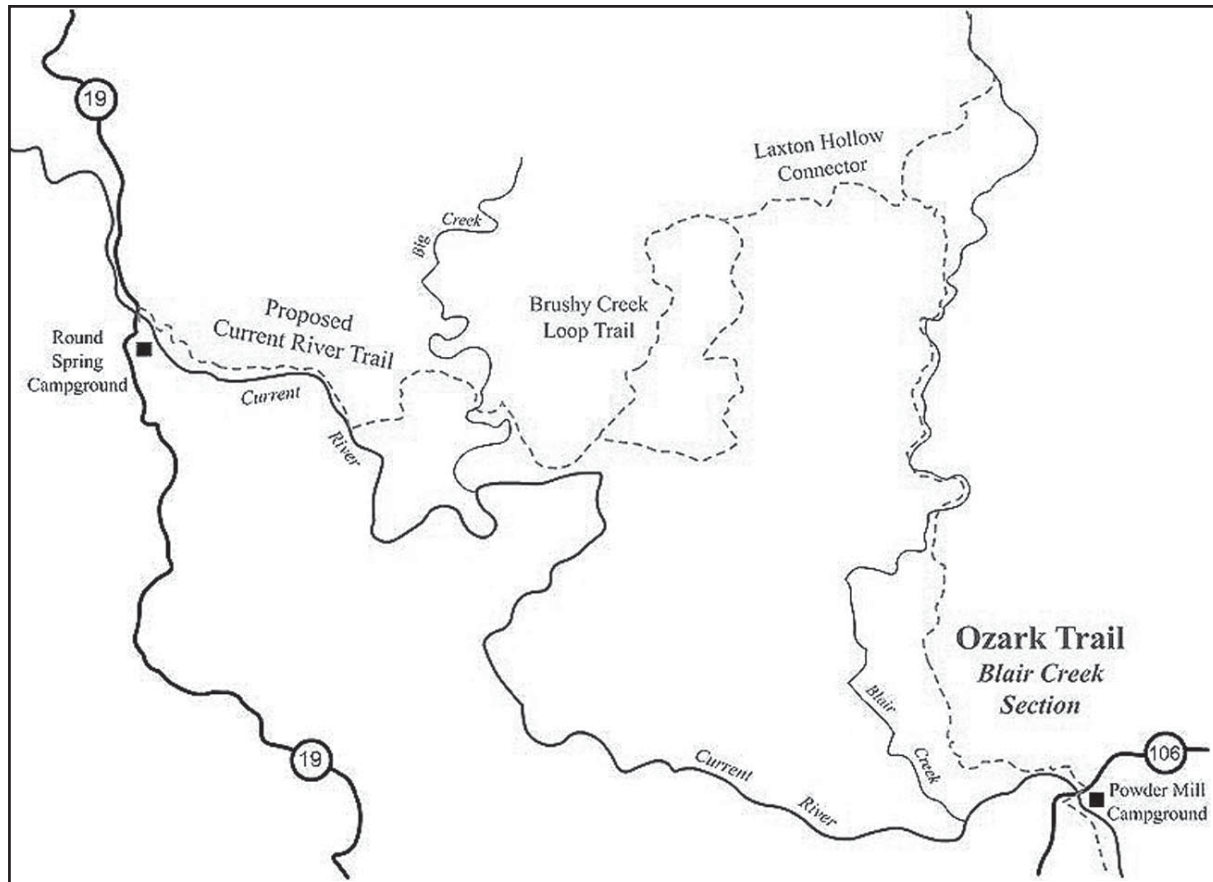
See page 7 for OTA merchandise order form.

Schedule of Events

We’ll be publishing our December/January schedule soon.

Check www.ozarktrail.com
for current information.

Construction Report *Continued from page 1:*



order of business was work on the North Fork Section with the Mark Twain National Forest. In November, we returned to reconstruct portions of this trail. This is an important link to get to Arkansas, and we'll have 1-2 outings a month through the winter with a base camp at Noblett Lake. Check the website for construction dates.

Now, back to the Roger Pryor Backcountry. The Blair Creek section of the Ozark Trail runs through this area, and using the Laxton Hollow spur you can venture over to Himont and connect to the Brushy Creek loop.

The OTA and planners at Pioneer Forest and DNR, in conjunction with volunteers from the Sierra Club, have proposed an extension to the Backcountry trail system to Round Spring. We're naturally excited about this. Imagine a forty-mile hike from Powder Mill up through Blair Creek, over the hills past Brushy Creek and Big Creek, then along the bluffs of the Current River to Round Spring. And then... canoe 25 miles back down to Powder Mill! Sound interesting?

There is still a lot of planning to do with the National Park Service, the Department of Natural Resources, the LAD Foundation and the Sierra Club. If all goes well, construction could begin in 2007. This trail isn't officially part of the Ozark Trail, but it's such a compelling route and offers so many trip options in conjunction with the Ozark Trail that we can't help but lend a hand in this effort. I'm eager to get working on these great trail projects, and I hope to see you at one of our outings.

-John Roth

Fall Mega-Event Cancelled... Well, Sort of

The Fall mega-event, partnered with REI, Inc. and scheduled for September 23rd, seemed destined for the scrap heap. It was originally scheduled for Johnson's Shut-ins State Park but those plans were dropped when agreements couldn't be secured with DNR. So it was moved to Council Bluff Lake where a re-route of the spur trail connecting the Trace Creek section with the Council Bluff Lake trail was needed. The U.S. Forest Service needed to re-route this spur trail because some beavers had constructed a dam across the Telleck Branch of the Big River flooding about 2,000 feet of the trail and they worked quickly to get the project ready given the late change of plans from Johnson's Shut-Ins.

Sounds like a good plan right? But Mother Nature had other plans.

With weather forecasters predicting a 90% chance of severe storms for the 23rd, and with a lot of damage from the previous day's storms still present in the surrounding area, the OTA decided it was best to cancel the event. A cancellation notice was posted on the OTA website and emailed to the volunteers. But since we had already ordered food and set up camp, we decided to hang around to see if the weather would break in time for the evening BBQ and bonfire.

At 8:00 a.m. a small group huddled under a pair of pop-up tents in a driving rainstorm, thunder drowning out the scant conversation. Then along came some headlights cutting through the heavy rain – a single car containing a pair from Kansas City who had left before the cancellation notice was sent. Then another set of headlights. And another. It was a scene reminiscent of the ending to the movie "A Field of Dreams." A stream of cars soon lined the road.

At 8:45 a.m. the storm veered south. The rains let up to a light shower and then they stopped. Over 50 volunteers emerged from beneath the tents and out of cars to stare skyward, then turn their attention to event organizer Greg Echele. "We've cancelled today's event," he said. "But for those already here, if you want, we can try to build what we can."

So the "cancellation" was off and trail building was on. John Roth led the volunteers to the worksite, a short walk from the Council Bluff campground. And build they did. Volunteers spent the next five hours carving out a beautiful trail along the steep rocky slopes above the Telleck Branch. This hearty group built almost a half-mile of new hand-cut trail. The group was rewarded to a wonderful barbeque prepared by OTA chef Jeff Goetter; a raffle of merchandise provided by REI (which raised over \$300 for the OTA); a spectacular sunset; and a crystal clear and crisp night sky with a roaring bonfire and some incredible star gazing. A few meteorites were even spotted that night.

It was one of the more memorable days on the Ozark Trail. Thanks to the U.S. Forest Service for their great support. Thanks to REI for a successful raffle and a generous financial contribution to help cover food costs. And *thanks to all of our volunteers* who made it in person and in spirit.

Robert Smith wins Central States Region AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

More than any other recreational or cultural resource in America, the success story of trails in the United States has been written by volunteers. For twelve years, American Hiking Society has conducted a nationwide search to recognize the tireless efforts of volunteers who give countless hours to preserve and maintain America's trails.

The OTA's own Robert Smith was selected from the Central States region (Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri and Nebraska) Robert received a specially designed plaque, a one-year American Hiking Society membership, and some great hiking gear. I tried to catch up with the celebrity and got this response to his new found fame (which he is more than a little uncomfortable with):

"I had always planned to work on trails after I retired. However, the only place I knew about that had this opportunity was at the Shaw Arboretum (now called the Shaw Nature Preserve). My plan was to work there. But, I hiked the OT quite a bit, and Danny McMurphy and I had hiked the Trace Creek section with John Roth before the OTA was formed. At some point, I think Danny told me about an OTC meeting at Meramec State Park. I went to two of those. At the second one, some one proposed the formation of an all-volunteer organization. John Roth chimed in, and a date for a formative meeting was set. I went to that meeting, and I have been involved ever since."

Robert's involvement has been tireless. He has seen other volunteers come and then, sadly, go. He has watched as agencies' focuses have shifted from trail building to closing areas and cutting staff. If the DNR, MDC, Corp of Engineers and Park Service could embrace only a small piece of Robert's dedication, the Adopt a Trail program would have a waiting list for sections. As Robert watches this latest shift in public funding, he continues to show up for work outings, send out reminders to adopters and lobby for his most recent trail orphan. And somehow, amazingly, he continues to find time to hike. The OTA is fortunate to count Robert Smith among its members and steadfast volunteers.



Love Blooms on the Trail

This Spring, if you looked very carefully, you might have noticed a rare flower along the trails. It was planted in the fall, nurtured through the winter and blossomed into a beautiful relationship. JC and Sara met and fell in love on the OT. What started as being assigned to the same work crew has culminated in being assigned the same address. Though both are from the St. Louis area, they never would have run across each other's paths had it not been for the OTA. JC spent most if not all of his free time tending a large adopt-a-trail section last year. Now, tending a new marriage, the team has adopted a different section and plan to spend their time on the trail together.





OTA GEAR – ORDER FORM

Mail This Form To:
Ozark Trail Association
483 South Kirkwood Road, #40
Kirkwood, Missouri 63122

Ship Order To:
Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ **State:** _____
Zip Code: _____
Daytime Phone: _____
Email: _____

OTA Item	Size	Quantity	Item Price	Total
Baseball Hat (green bill, OTA logo, khaki top)			\$ 10.00	
Baseball Hat (OTA logo, all khaki)			\$ 10.00	
T-Shirt - Green (S,M,L,XL,XXL)***			\$ 10.00	
T-Shirt - Blue (S,M,L,XL,XXL)***			\$ 10.00	
T-Shirt - Yellow (S,M,L,XL,XXL)***			\$ 10.00	
T-Shirt - Bone (S,M,L,XL,XXL)***			\$ 10.00	
Ceramic Coffee Mug			\$ 5.00	
Ozark Trail Hat Pin **			\$ 5.00	
OTA Member Patches (get an extra for your pack) **			\$ 2.00	
OTA - Stickers - Clear background **			\$ 0.50	
OTA - Stickers - White background **			\$ 0.50	
Hiking Staff Medallions (for wooden poles) **			\$ 3.00	
			Subtotal	
Postage & Handling **\$1 to \$24.99 = \$4.00, \$25 to \$49.99 = \$7.00 \$50 to \$100 = \$9.00				
			Total	

* Missouri sales tax is included in item prices.

** Postage and handling is waived for patches, stickers and medallions. Instead, send a business-size Self Addressed Stamped Envelope.

*** Some sizes may not be available.

Make checks or money orders payable to: Ozark Trail Association. Return a printed copy of this completed form to the address above for processing. Allow approximately 2 to 4 weeks for delivery.
(Revised May 22, 2006)

Change of address/phone/e-mail form:

Name _____ OTA# (from membership card) _____

New Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

New Phone Number: (____) _____

New E-address: _____

Please do not mail my newsletter, I prefer an electronic newsletter _____

and my email address is _____

Mail to Ozark Trail Association, 483 S. Kirkwood Road, #40, Kirkwood, Missouri 63122

Or - e-mail your changes to the membership jockey, Danny McMurphy, at mcmurphy1@yahoo.com

The OTA needs your support even if you can't come out and work. You can obtain a personal membership for only \$20 per year (family memberships of two or more are only \$35 per year).

Sign up at the OTA website, <http://www.ozarktrail.com/> and then mail in your \$20 (\$35) to the OTA address posted on the membership page. Membership includes the OTA 2005 Guide to the Ozark Trail, a laminated membership card, and an OTA patch for your jacket, patch or hat. Join us today!

If you'd like to receive your newsletter in pdf format via email and save the OTA printing and postage, drop Margo an email: margo@ozarktrailguide.com

Members Welcome: OTA Meetings

The Ozark Trail Association meets monthly at a location in the St. Louis area. Check out the website (www.ozarktrail.com) for exact times and location. If you can make it, stop in. The meetings are open to the public and input is welcome. Meetings are professionally run so you can count on finishing at 9:00pm. But the group usually goes out to Growlers or Ruby Tuesdays for a late snack and some great camaraderie afterwards. So join in the fun, we'd love to see you.



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FALL NEWSLETTER